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SOC 50

TELEGRAM

INDICATE
☐ COLLECT
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FROM: AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL

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E O 1~~6652~~XX XDS 6-8-09 (Castro, Raúl H.) OR-M
TAGS: AR, SHUM
SUBJECT: Ambassador Meets with FonMin Pastor

ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CONFIDENTIAL BUENOS AIRES 4672

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1. (C - Entire Text)

2. At my request, I met with FonMin Carlos Pastor yesterday noon (June 7) to discuss several facets in the human rights field. FonMin, affectionately known as "Stone Face" by DipCorps members, was in true form. Garbed in his undertaker suit, he met me with a stern look, certainly not as a manifestation of friendship. The minus two degrees (Celsius) below zero in the tomb-looking office might have added to the distorted appearance. Key points discussed follow:

3. FonMin initiated the conversation by reminding me my audience was coming at a most unfortunate time. He stated he, President Videla, and other key members of GOA were bristling over the latest barrage of slanderous (his words) material appearing in American newspapers. He stated all this had the appearance of a concerted

TIMERMAN, Jacobo

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effort to influence the visit of IAHRC. He didn't quite say so, but inferred many military members felt some of this might be USG input. He specifically was referring to articles appearing in New York Times, plus an editorial, and the latest in the Washington Post. His voice went up one octave and said "can you imagine comparing General Videla to Idi Amin" and calling him blood-thirsty. Comment: He referred to the Idi Amin comparison several times, so it seemed this point was the one that hurt the most. FonMin Pastor and President Videla are related by marriage. They are both married to sisters. END COMMENT

4. Pastor hesitated for a moment. This permitted me to break the monologue and explain to the FonMin of independence of US news media and most certainly USG had no input into articles referred to by Pastor. FonMin gave a sigh of relief and thanked me for explanation as he was meeting President Videla later. He assured me Videla would be happy and very much relieved to learn of USG non-involvement. I further explained Embassy satisfied series of articles on Argentina were not result of concerted effort on anybody's part to embarrass GOA. This helped put Pastor at ease.

5. Timerman case: I then inquired about the status of Jacobo Timerman case. FonMin replied matter at an

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impasse. He assured me he and Videla were two GOA officials carrying burden in attempt to free Jacobo Timerman. FonMin explained AF and Navy have been convinced. He stated there were still several hard-liners in Army with negative attitudes. Pastor told me if Timerman would sign an agreement, in good faith, agreeing that on his release he would not write, criticize, stir-up problems for GOA chances of Timerman being released became real. Pastor said he felt he could persuade hardliners to go along with release. He explained he had discussed this matter with Ram Nirgad, Israeli Ambassador, but had not received an answer. Nirgad discussed this matter with me on May 31 (see Buenos Aires 4429). Nirgad made it clear GOA wanted a personal guarantee from him as Ambassador, and also from Israeli Government, specifying Timerman would not write, criticise or create problems for Argentina once he left country. Israeli Ambassador stated Timerman has far exceeded his age of majority thus he (Nirgad) not in position to vouch for Timerman's behavior after release. I promised FonMin I would convey his suggestion to Timerman's Rabbi. I reminded FonMin it was a personal decision only Jacobo Timerman could make.

6. IAHRC Visit: On my inquiry about status of IAHRC

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at this moment, was taking a somewhat neutral role. He denied GOA was in Nicaragua's camp. His suggestion was OAS should send a committee to Nicaragua comprised of those countries not emotionally involved. He stated Panama, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador were all either directly or indirectly involved. Pastor stated he would discuss Nicaraguan and other Central American problems with Videla.

8. Disappearances: Inasmuch as FonMin summarily dismissed "desaparecidos" problems by stating he had no solution to problem, I again raised issue. I asked if he knew what GOA's approach would be with IAHRC. He replied Videla and staff members are seriously studying problem hoping to come up with an acceptable formula. He did say up to now there were no brilliant revelations on the topic. I stated talk of day was disappearances of six students. His answer was it was a tremendous setback to progress that had been made. Pastor assured me GOA is exerting every effort to find whereabouts of these youngsters. At this point he made a plea for patience as in his opinion progress was being made, even though at a slower pace than suited them.

9. FonMin reminded me of our discussion on Jehovahs Witnesses a few months ago. He told me a full study is being made on how to handle Jehovahs Witnesses who are

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visit, FonMin replied date had not been set. He said it could be August. He emphasized GOA had absolutely nothing to do with postponement of visit. He repeated several times GOA was prepared to receive IAHRC at end of May and is still ready to receive IAHRC at any time. He clarified he would be less than honest if he didn't tell me the longer it takes IAHRC to visit Argentina the more opportunity GOA has to improve its conditions. Pastor stated plan was to clear prison of PEN detainees by end of year. He explained prisoner status in all categories are being reviewed by proper authorities. Pastor said he didn't have any solutions for "desaparecidos" nor had any concrete information been given him on the matter.

7. Nicaragua: FonMin volunteered information on Central American conditions. He made specific reference to Nicaragua. Even though this Embassy was info to State 146191, I took opportunity to, in general terms, review USG's posture reference Nicaraguan issue. I stayed close to Ambassador's McGee's comments as Pastor indicated he was familiar with Ambassador's remarks given to OAS. He appeared to agree with USG's position and also Andean formula. He stated Mexico had been precipitious in their action and had only added fuel to the fire. In a defensive manner he stated Argentina,

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conscientious objectors, children not saluting the flag, and not signing national anthem. Pastor said they want to fashion their "modus operandi" in the American style. He asked me if I could furnish him with legislation, literature or whatever is available in the manner Jehovah problems are handled. I promised him I would make the inquiry from Department. Therefore, suggest Department send this Embassy whatever literature may be available on subject.

10. COMMENT: DipCorps looks upon Pastor as a pleasant but innoucuous person. He is categorized as cooperative but not knowledgeable in foreign affairs. His claim to fame is his relationship to Videla by marriage. Up to now there has never been any indication of hostility towards USG. He always gives the appearance of being tired and of being a potential member of the "geritol" set. END COMMENT

CASTRO

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